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ABSTRACT

ADAM (Administrative Development and Management), an administrator preparation partnership between Greenwood (South Carolina) School District 50 and Clemson University, is described in this paper. The program uses practicing administrators in collaboration with college faculty to train prospective school administrators. The purpose is to provide guided theoretically and clinically based experiences and to identify and develop leadership and management skills necessary for effective school administrators. Topics covered in the course include team building and group dynamics, problem solving, time management, finance, interview skills, and technology. This collaborative arrangement provides school districts and universities with a wider range of resources, improved identification of potential administrators, and superior training. One of the greatest benefits was that through shared experiences, individuals became stronger as members of groups who shared authority, built mutual trust, took greater risks, and became innovators. One table and one figure are included. (Contains 19 references.) (LMI)

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ADAM: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO PREPARE FUTURE ADMINISTRATORS

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ADAM: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO PREPARE FUTURE ADMINISTRATORS

ABSTRACT

ADAM (Administrative Development And Management) is a joint partnership between Greenwood, SC School District #50 and Clemson University. The purpose of the partnership is to identify and develop leadership and management skills necessary for an effective educational administrator. The collaborative effort among college professors, school district administrators, practitioners in the field, and potential school administrators enables everyone to share a common goal: To provide guided theoretical- and clinical-based experiences aimed toward improved administrative preparation.

Traditional preparation programs for school administrators are representative of individual institutions, universities, school districts or professional organizations, working as separate entities. With the exception of clinical professors used in some programs, each entity has secured a separate preparation program for preparing administrators. This program represents a concerted effort on the part of a school district and a university to eliminate the barriers of isolation between the two groups.

Introduction

ADAM (Administration Development and Management) is an administration preparedness program in Greenwood (SC) School District 50 which serves as a model example of collaboration effectiveness between school district practitioners and university professors. ADAM is a joint partnership between Greenwood School District 50 administrators and Clemson University professors. Its purpose is to focus on and develop leadership and management skills necessary for an effective administrator. Because of the collaborative effort among school district administrators, college professors, practitioners in the field, and potential school administrators, the team shares a common vision: To provide guided theoretical and clinical-based experience in school administration--all aimed toward improving the quality of education. ADAM's success is partly based on the strong backgrounds and experiences in educational administration of both the practitioners and professors who serve as trainers for the program. The success of the program is also evidenced by the identification and development of those essential leadership and management skills necessary for an effective school administrator. As a result, participants gain broader perspectives and knowledge bases in leadership are critical for successful careers in school administration.

Background

The decade of the 1980s produced a plethora of reports regarding the school principal's increased responsibility and critical role in both school

effectiveness and school improvement (Andrews, 1989). In fact, much research contends that the principal is the most significant position in the school system. The growing body of knowledge about quality schools consistently pointed out the key role of administrators in such schools. Recent research on educational reform and school improvement programs confirmed that success may be largely dependent upon skilled administrators (Achilles, 1990). The obsolete conception of the school administrator as a relatively passive manager has given way to a more accurate view of the educational administrator as an active instructional leader. Evidence accumulated from research coupled with widespread recent concern about the quality of American education has contributed to a renewed interest in the important role school principals play in initiating and sustaining school excellence (Edwards, 1989). As the principal's responsibility has increased, so has the pressure on colleges and universities to prepare successful principals for the realities of education in the 1990s and the twenty-first century (Twale & Short, 1989). Therefore, the question becomes, is there a better model, a better alternative to the preparation programs used in universities today?

The need for highly competent individuals to fill positions of school leadership will be particularly great in the coming years. The National Association of Elementary School Principals indicates that one-half of its present members will retire by 1992 (Sava, 1986). Almost one-quarter of the active school superintendents are already 56 years old or older.

Three prevalent societal factors impinge on the preparation of future principals. First, the principal is currently regarded as being "in the middle". The principal is conventionally perceived as a true middle manager, being bombarded from above by superintendents and school boards, from below by teachers, and from both sides by parents, community, and students. Additionally, continuing educational reform emphasizes the instructional leadership role for the principal, which is dissimilar to those functions practiced by many current administrators (Short & Spencer, 1990). School boards and superintendents envision principals implementing administrative policy, while teachers demand curriculum improvement, and students anticipate a supportive climate. Add the conflict inherent in collective bargaining, and abruptly the principalship is not the attractive quintessence some perceive.

Secondly, societal pressures dictate that more women and minorities be appointed to the principalship. Research indicates women and minorities account for less than ten percent of all principalships (Peterson & Finn, 1985). Although many areas may not have significant minority populations, the majority of employees in most school districts are female and deserve consideration.

The third social factor, age, is significant since approximately fifty percent of all currently employed principals are age fifty-five (55) or over (Finn, 1986). Consequently, the most dramatic administrative turnover in educational history will eventuate during the ensuing decade. With the anticipation of such dramatic changes, universities and school districts are

encouraged to generate germane principal preparation procedures and techniques.

Yet current practices for preparing school administrators do not always identify and develop needed competence and criticism of college and university pre-service preparation is widespread. Much of this training is widely believed to be out of touch with reality--irrelevant, out of date, abstract, and impractical (Hoyle, 1989).

Preparation programs

The preparation of school administrators had typically been considered a college or university function. Only with the "effective schools" movement did school districts become involved in the preparation of school administrators. Many of the current school administrators were employed as administrators in the 1950s and 1960s when the requirements were minimal at best. Many administrators were hired and then certified later. Concern about the quality of preparation programs for school administrators is not new (Kuh & McCarthy, 1989; Hoyle, 1981). Mitchell (1972), in the Leadership in Public Education study, concluded:

> The effectiveness of the manager cannot be predicted by the number of degrees he holds, the grades he received ion school, or the formal management education program he attends. Academic achievement is not a valid yardstick by which to measure leadership potential. Leaders must acquire through their own experience and reflection vital knowledge and skills (p. 32).

If formal preparation programs are inadequate, what steps can be taken to correct the situation? Some school districts and professional organizations have entered the administrator preparation arena (Lane & Moffett, 1991). Logically the school district cannot take on the role of primary preparation for administration, but the district should have some input in the preparation program. The district should identify and encourage successful teachers/ staff to enroll in an educational administration program. Principals should act as unofficial mentors for teachers whom they think have potential as future administrators. The district should also provide an organized program of assistance for prospective administrators. This program should take the form of seminars and/or workshops designed to acquaint the prospective administrator with skills necessary for success in the role of an educational leader (Mosrie, 1990).

Traditional preparation programs for school administrators were representative of individual institutions/universities and school districts working as separate entities. With the exception of an occasional university faculty member as a guest with a group of aspiring school administrators, or the practitioner who is an occasional guest for a university class, each organization secured a separate vision and thus differed programs (Lane & Moffett, 1991). However, a direct line of communication and a shared vision between the two groups are essential to collaboration arrangements such as ADAM. ADAM successfully eliminated the barriers of isolation between the university and the school district.

Fuhr (1990) states that programs such as ADAM

> ...must train future school administrators, combining the talents and wisdom of school practitioners and college professors, both of whom have demonstrated competence out on the front lines of public education.

The program

ADAM utilized practicing administrators in Greenwood District 50 in cooperation with faculty from Clemson University. The program was designed to work with potential administrators during the course of the school year in a variety of settings and with multi-dimensional activities. All trainers were current or former administrators who use concepts of andragogy in their training techniques.

With competent university and school district personnel in place, ADAM provided a variety of field-based experiences. Sessions in problem solving, time management, finance, personnel, and technology were also provided. Corrective and instructional feedback was provided the participants enabling them to focus on skills that needed to be developed and maintained. Table 1 summarizes the experiences with accompanying skills that addressed administrative components of the sessions.

Table 1

Topics with Accompanying Skill Dimensions Addressed by ADAM

Topic	Skill Dimensions
Team Building and Group Dynamics	Positive verbal/nonverbal communication, initiation, persuasion, reconciliation, teamwork, acceptance of criticism, commitment, risk taking, focus, stress tolerance, non-isolation of others, and overall group harmony
Problem Solving	Role playing, important/ distracting information, risk taking, saying "No" and identifying the best and worst administrator

Time Management	Setting long and short term goals, effective time managers, prioritizing , avoiding procrastination, brevity, and organization
Finance	Education Finance Act, allocation of funds, school expenses, budget preparation
Interviewing	Philosophy adoption, goal setting, vision formulation, effective verbal / nonverbal communication, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
Technology	Computer-Osiris, Classroom Management, Library/Support System

One activity

A limited amount of paper, one pair of scissors, and one roll of tape lay aimlessly on three tables in an otherwise empty room. Soon, groups of seven to eight potential principals--anxiously awaiting upcoming instructions -assembled around the tables. "Using the materials you have before you," a voice of status exclaims, "you have thirty minutes to construct a school." Complete silence fills the room as minds begin searching for possible solutions. One group member asks for more information, clarity of instruction, and for more detail. "Just...build a school," is the response. Another group member pushes all materials to a fellow member-the "creative" one in the group-and states, "Here...we'll just let you do this." "No," the fellow member states, "We will all do this together."

Thus began a foundation for effective group processing. Once the groups begin to act, the role of the trainers was to look for those who initiated a plan, set goals, assigned roles, persuaded the unwilling, reconciled conflicts, gained contributions from all members, and brought the participants to consensus. Afterwards, trainers provided immediate and constructive feedback to various individuals and to groups as a whole. The above activity exemplified of one of many team in "Team Building and Group Dynamics" (Vaughn, 1991) offered by the Administration Development and Management (ADAM) Team.

Benefits

With collaborative programs like ADAM in place, school districts and universities benefit from a wider range of resources, greater identification of

potential administrators, and superior training. The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA, 1987) stated that a collaboration between the university and the profession must exist to better train potential and practicing school administrator. To provide the best experiences possible, an exchange of ideas with ongoing dialogue is paramount.

Improving the skills of the school administrator clearly feeds directly into the success of any educational institution. Therefore, universities, school districts, and even businesses should work together toward common goals. Only then will improvement bring about positive growth in schools as well as in communities. Collaboration efforts among these groups will also promote quality instructional opportunities which will in turn better meet the needed job market skills of the institutions (Sergiovanni, 1989). ADAM seeks to develop skills in communication, group processing, problem solving and decision making, human relations, financial management, and technology--all of which are vital to the success of an individual in the administration realm. As shown in Figure 1, the results of a collaboration effort such as ADAM can be beneficial to a community in a variety of ways.

Figure 1

Factors that result from the ADAM program

The school district benefits from ADAM by being able to identify potential administrators early and mentor them thereby enlarging the pool of potential administrators beyond those who self-select to become an administrator. School districts can also benefit by utilizing practicing administrators as trainers for the future generation of administrators. The practitioners must be carefully selected to represent the needs of the twenty-first century and not a retrenchment of past management philosophy.

The university can benefit from such a program by utilizing clinical practitioners in the preparation of future administrators. The clinical experiences in administrator preparation programs have been criticied for a failure to meet the needs of future administrators (Short & Price, 1992). Unique progrms such as ADAM can provide the opportunity to develop cooperative arrangements which can lead to outstanding clinical experiences for university students. The opportunity to collaborate with school districts and to meet the specific needs of school districts is also critical. Also, professors must available themselves of the opportunity to work in the real world of the school and not become an "ivory-tower loner."

Conclusions

It is clear that ADAM addressed traits in the real world of public school administration essential for persons in leadership positions. Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of this program was that through shared experiences, individuals become stronger as units--groups who attempted to share

authority, built mutual trust, took greater risks, became innovators--and ultimately will become more competent administrators because of their individual and group experiences. Thanks to the collaboration, effort, and high commitment levels of the team members, the program was successful in preparing future leaders for a career in administration and ultimately toward the improvement of education.

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